

WHITEVILLE

New coach brings pedigree, expectations to ‘Pack



Photo by Jim Harper

Whiteville senior quarterback Matt Merritt has a tough task in taking over for graduated 2009 QB Beret Proctor. Merritt is a tough kid and athletic, the same traits that made Proctor a solid two-year starter for the Wolfpack. Merritt's job will be facilitated by new coach Baxter Morris' run-first offense. Morris won the state title last year with Albemarle High School, and the shiny championship ring on his finger made convincing the Wolfpack players about the offense much easier.

Quick facts

4-2 conference, 9-4 overall
Lost to Tarboro in third round of state 2A playoffs
Coach Baxter Morris (1st year)

Whiteville certainly expected to build on a promising 2009 season under veteran head coach Bob Lewis until he resigned to avoid restrictions on his retirement. But the Wolfpack didn't waste much time in hiring another experienced coach in Baxter Morris. Even as Whiteville drew positives from a season that saw them back in the upper half of the league, Morris' Albemarle team played a 16-game season, winning every single contest on their way to the 1AA state title.

The Saturday after he won his ring, Morris married a woman from Whiteville, and after Lewis' unexpected departure things fell into place perfectly. Morris' new team is a bit of a question mark but having an unquestionably successful new skipper should assuage the concerns of the faithful locals.

Departed

The Wolfpack's leading rusher in 2009, shifty runner Trent Sinkler gained 1,050 yards and scored eight TDs on his way to first-team all-conference honors. Speedy running back Roosevelt Colson accumulated 756 yards and nine TDs on the ground to go along with 99 yards receiving and two TD receptions. Replacing that production in the backfield will be critical to the Wolfpack's success.

Perhaps Whiteville's biggest player loss is starting QB Beret Proctor. He passed for 437 yards and five TDs and rushed for 297 yards and six TDs in leading the Wolfpack to a runner-up finish in the Waccamaw Conference and trip to the third round of the state playoffs. His leadership was unquestioned by teammates.

Returning

After leading the defense with 97 tackles as a sophomore, Frank Ciamillo is poised for even greater things as an 11th grader. He is the only returning first-team all-conference player for the Wolfpack.

Matt Merritt has moved across the line of scrimmage for his senior year, going from starting linebacker to starting quarterback.

Willie Bellamy, 6-foot-3 senior tight end, is one of several returning starters on the offensive line. Others include center Gary Vereen and guard Jorge Jones. Brandon Hatcher,

a 300-pounder, has been moved from defense to offense to help spring the Pack's running game.

Coach Said It

On his success at Albemarle High School, including a 16-0 record and state 1AA championship in 2009

"We went there in 1993 with Jack Gaster. We were able to turn around a program that had been struggling for 47 years... Through hard work and community support we were able to win four titles. We had a lot of 10-win seasons. We had a lot of great community support and we put in a lot of hard work, plus we had some talented kids."

On his reasons for taking the Whiteville job

One week after the 2009 state 1AA championship game, Morris married a woman who lives four miles from Whiteville High. When the Whiteville job opened up, it was a no-brainer. "My reasons for coming here were pretty much all personal."

On his first order of business at Whiteville

"Our first point of emphasis here was the weight room. Coach (Bob) Lewis had them working hard and we've continued that. The kids have really bought into it right out of the blocks."

On his offensive philosophy

"It's an offense we spent 30 years building with Jack Gaster. It's an offset T backfield with a fullback. Sometimes we'll be in the I. We're going to try to run the football first and throw it in situations when we can."

On competing in the Waccamaw Conference

"We're excited about the challenge. It's a very competitive league and a lot of the schools in this league have a history of success... It's a 2A/3A split league. We're a very undersized school in this league. If they realigned now we're a 1A school. It's a league with a lot of diversity with the sizes of the schools. Most if not all of them are bigger than us."

On the Wolfpack's key to success

"We can be very competitive with our first 22 guys on offense and defense. After that we'll have to establish some depth. If we can establish some depth we'll have a chance to be competitive in most of our games."



Photo courtesy of the Whiteville News-Reporter
Whiteville head coach Baxter Morris

What's biting?



Black drum

Junior angler Lucas Butler means business whenever he wets a hook. August 9 he landed this nice 1-pound, 8-ounce black drum while fishing at the Ocean Crest Pier.

Photo courtesy of Ocean Crest Pier



First shark

Five-year-old Zayne Simmons hooked this shark, his first catch ever, using a mullet minnow. He was fishing off of East Moore Street near the Southport Waterfront on August 9 with his uncle Quisto Moore (left).

Photo contributed



State Port Pilot file photo

Terrell Stanley has committed to play football at East Carolina next year, partly due to his severe intensity on the football field. Stanley leads a defensive unit replete with like-minded ball hawks that hope to produce tons of turnovers this year.

Cougars' talented defense should lead team in 2010

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talented senior. Levi Prince, Dishon Lee and Devante Stanley really need to step up for the Cougars; all three are good leaders in the locker room and physical bruisers on the gridiron, in addition to having played significantly since their freshman seasons.

Most teams would have a serious problem after losing three productive backs in one year, but South is fortunate to have Marcus Hankins and Greg Burton-White waiting in the wings. Hankins is seriously quick and explosive, while Burton-White is a slightly smaller mirror image capable of a lightning burst in the rushing lanes. In the new spread offense, both will be called on to catch the ball plenty as well, something they've shown ability to do throughout the summer and August.

Coach said it

On South Brunswick's strengths
"Experience. We've got a good group of seniors that have played a lot of snaps and won a lot of ballgames. We're going to depend on their leadership to carry us through the season."

"Limiting our mistakes, carrying out our responsibilities, making the right reads... those type things."

On a possible breakout player

"Number seven (Cameron Scott) has been pretty good this summer and Hankins has been pretty good, our tailback. I'm looking for those guys to step up and be leaders and to make plays."

On the loss of three key backs and two key linemen

"Number one, we can't replace those guys. What Kenny White, Ra(shen) Bellamy, Quan Ray, Zac Kelly and Thomas Randolph, what those guys brought off the field was just as important as on the field. Replacing those guys, we're not going to be able to do it. That was last year's team. We have to concentrate on this year's team and looking for guys to step up in those roles."

On potential quarterbacks

"We've got one kid who's taken a varsity snap and that was mop-up duty last year. So getting those guys repetition and seeing different fronts and coverages is important for us."

Imperatives for South football success



Spanish mackerel dinner

Josh Ady from Port Huron, Mich., John and Leslie Stone from Cole Camp, Mo., and Sean Guinn from Hixon, Tenn., went on a half-day trip aboard the *Yeah Right II* recently and caught a couple of Spanish mackerel dinners. They were fishing with Capt. Butch Foster.

Photo contributed